A

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

THE DEVIL

AND A

SOCINIAN DIVINE,

On the Confines of the other World.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A

DIALOGUE, &c.

D. GOOD morrow! Friend; I am very happy to ſee you.

S. I aſk your pardon, Sir; but you have rather the advantage of me.

D. Indeed I have been long particularly obliged to you; although you are not perſonally acquainted with me.

S. I cannot think, Sir, that I have ever obliged you. May I be bold to aſk who does me the honour.

D. I ſhall ſatisfy you by and by. But I wiſh, in the meantime, to know your opinion of the ſtate of matters in the land of the living.

S. In the land of the living!—You ſurpriſe me, Sir. Are not both you and I inhabitants of that land?

D. Your Reverence is entirely miſtaken. You are now an inhabitant of *Hades*.

S. That is impoſſible, Sir; for then I ſhould have no conſciouſneſs, or recollection. I ſhould be in a ſtate of profound ſleep!

D. Fy!—that is a ſilly whim of ſome of my good friends on earth. But they ſeldom bring it hither with them.

213

S. You confound me, Sir! Indeed, the laſt idea I can recollect, before meeting with you, was, that I was ſtretched on a death-bed, ſurrounded by my weeping friends, and about to ſleep with my Fathers till the morning of the reſurrection.

D. And did you really expect to ſleep ſo long?

S. I certainly did. But now I find I have only been ſlumbering. Yet I cannot account for it, that I have not awaked where I fell aſleep; and that all my friends are gone.

D. Indeed you ſeem to be ſtill aſleep. But if you will only attend to the different ſenſations you now have from what you had a little ago, you muſt be convinced of a change of ſtate.—Where is your body now?

S. My body, Sir!—I cannot be here without my body; for matter always conſtituted the whole of my frame.

D. Your ſoul ſeems to be groſs enough. But your body was certainly compoſed of materials which you have left behind. Pray, ſatisfy yourſelf—Lay your hand on your heart, as you was wont to do, when declaiming againſt prieſtcraft.

S. Ah! I am chang'd Indeed!—I have ſtill internal ſenſation, although I have loſt the organs of ſenſe.——Is it poſſible, then, that there ſhould be being diſtinct from matter!

D. Juſt as poſſible as the exiſtence of God.

S. That I never doubted.

D. You did not, indeed, deny this in as many words.

words: But you worſhipped a god like yourſelf. You made him a corporeal being. You aſcribed to him thoſe paſſions that originate from matter only; and you circumſcribed him in ſuch a manner as matter alone can be circumſcribed. By a ſtrange effort of wiſdom, you diſcarded an incarnate God, that you might make way for a god of fleſh.

S. You wrong me, Sir—The latter is the doctrine of Papiſts; but it was never mine.

D. Truly, on this head, you outdid the whole conclave of Rome. They aſcribe omnipreſence to the body of Jeſus, by virtue of its union to God; but you made God himſelf to be body. You was ſo far conſiſtent, indeed, as to deny his omnipreſence, by confining him to place. Some of your ideas, however, appeared to us extremely paradoxical: There was one eſpecially, that could not have occurred to any inhabitant of this world; and, well as we know the folly of the ſons of Adam, we could ſcarcely have believed that it would have gained credit.

S. I am afraid, Sir, you miſrepreſent my ſentiments—But what might this be?

D. You aſſerted, That it was abſolutely impoſſible that God could once ſuffer in human nature; and you endeavoured to prove, that he continually ſuffered in the divine.

S. I recollect no ſentiment of my party that could be liable to ſuch groſs miſconſtruction.

D. Ex-

D. Excuſe me, my good friend. Truth and falſehood appear without any diſguiſe in this ſtate. Did not you aſcribe real grief, repentance, anger, and revenge to the Divine Being! and can theſe exiſt in any mind without ſuffering?

S. I adhered cloſely to the language of ſcripture in theſe points.

D. Somewhat more cloſely, indeed, than when it aſſerts Jeſus to be God. You are juſtly entitled to the praiſe of great ingenuity—When your adverſaries told you, that hands, and feet, and paſſions, were aſcribed to the Supreme merely in a metaphorical ſenſe, and after the manner of men, you aſſerted, that all this was ſtrictly literal, and properly deſcriptive of the manner of God. When they affirmed, that Jeſus was literally called God; there you paid them home, by maintaining that all was metaphor.

S. You know it was the baſis of our ſyſtem to reject all myſtery.

D. It was oſtenſibly ſo. But you reſembled that famous uſurper who was a foe to all kingſhip but his own.

S. You cannot be ſo uncandid as to ſuppoſe that Unitarians believe any myſteries.

D. O yes; a great many—They believe that a clean thing can come out of an unclean; that a mere attribute may be the ſubject of other attributes, and a proper agent in all divine works; that a mere man may have all the powers, and perform

perform all the functions of deity; that there may be a reſurrection of that body which was never laid in the grave; eternal ſuffering without eternal exiſtence; and a God without infinite perfection.

S. You cannot in juſtice call theſe myſteries. Some things of this kind are believed by us, merely from our aborrence of myſtery.

D. Doubtleſs—It is a ſtriking proof of this abhorrence, that you deny the incarnation of a perſon, and grant that of an attribute.

S. No Socinian, Sir, was ever ſo irrational as to aſſert the incarnation either of a divine perſon, or of a divine attribute.

D. Vain man, your ſophiſms cannot paſs here. If you ſay that the Word is an attribute of deity; and, at the ſame time, acknowledge that it dwelt in Jeſus, and was ſo united to him as to be the principle of all his wiſdom and wonderful works; do you not grant what you pretend to deny?—Nay, do you not add abſurdity to myſtery, by aſcribing to a perfection what neceſſarily belongs to a perſon!

S. As you ſeem to be thoroughly verſant in theſe matters, I may confeſs to you, that we have been prodigiouſly puzzled by the paſſage you allude to—We have tried it many ways, and what you mention is the beſt we can make of it. But you injure us greatly, in ſuppoſing that we aſcribe

ſcribe to a mere man all the power and works of God.

D. What!—do you not ſay that Jeſus ſearcheth the hearts; and that he ſhall judge the world.

S. We do.

D. And are not theſe works proper to God?

S. By no means—Any mere man may perform them, if God communicate the power.

D. Aye, that is the queſtion. But can God communicate his peculiar prerogative; ſuch as that of being the Searcher of hearts, and the Judge of the univerſe?—Can God deny himſelf?

S. Jeſus is merely his deputy.

D. And is the judgment final?

S. It is—For "the Father hath committed all "judgment to the Son."

D. Then there lies no appeal from the deputy to the principal.

S. There can be no need of any: For the man Jeſus cannot err.

D. But although a human deputy be ſuppoſed infallible; yet, if he have all judgment committed to him, without any right of appeal, then it is not true that "God himſelf is Judge." And is not judgment committed to him, "that "all men may honour the Son, even as they ho-"nour the Father."

S. It is only meant, That they may honour the Son in his own place, as the Father in his.

D. According to your own principles, they muſt

muſt ſurely honour him as Supreme Judge; for you grant that this is his place, when you ſay that there lies no appeal from his ſentence.

S. We grant that he has all authority; but we cannot find in our hearts to allow him as much honour as the Father. It muſt be of an inferior kind!

D. That is a mere quibble—For if the work be the ſame, even ſuppoſing it true that he were merely a deputy, he muſt be entitled to the ſame kind of honour, though inferior in degree. Thus you agree with Papiſts, who aſcribe one kind of religious worſhip to God, and another to angels and ſaints.

S. That uſed to be a calumny of our adverſaries: But we were willing to bear any reproach rather than that of worſhipping him who was crucified.

D. I am glad to find you ſo candid in your acknowledgment.

S. But you charged our ſyſtem with great abſurdity as to the Reſurrection.

D. Do you own that the ſame body is raiſed which is laid in the grave?

S. I cannot, indeed; for "it is ſown a natu-"ral," but "raiſed a ſpiritual body."

D. But though the qualities be different, is it not ſubſtantially the ſame?

S. That cannot be conceived—For, perhaps, one member is in one part of the world, and an-

other in another. The ſubſtance of one limb has been devoured by a fiſh; and gone to the ſuſtenance of its body, this fiſh has been devoured by another; and ſo on—How then can the ſame body be raiſed?

D. Then it ſeems "a thing incredible to you, "that God ſhould raiſe the dead."

S. It does ſo, according to your view of it.

D. But how can that be raiſed again which was not laid down? How can reſurrection be aſſerted of the dead, if thoſe very perſons are not made alive who died?

S. New beings are raiſed in their room.

D. And are theſe rewarded or puniſhed by the Judge?

S. Undoubtedly they are.

D. I ſee, friend, you are determined to verify my aſſertion. You are abundantly fond of myſteries of your own kind. You deteſt the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's ſin, and that of Chriſt's righteouſneſs——

S. And on ſufficient grounds; for they are contrary to reaſon.

D. Yet you have a ſubſtitution of your own. According to you, God ſhall raiſe out of the duſt an innocent body (that is, an innocent perſon; for you know no difference), and impute to it all the ſins of a guilty perſon, to whom, in the former ſtate, it had no affinity whatſoever. Here is the imputation of ſin with a witneſs—imputation

tion without any repreſentation or relation. He creates another, and aſcribes to him all the merit of one with whom he was as little connected —Here is the imputation of righteouſneſs without ſuretyſhip or kindred ties. Is this kind of ſubſtitution more rational than that of the doctrine you deny?

S. We could think of no other plan for accommodating the doctrine of the reſurrection to reaſon.

D. Did you ſay the truth, you would own, that you ſaw many defects in ſcriptural reaſon, but none in your own.—But do you not believe that Chriſt roſe again?

S. Undoubtedly. Nay, we aſſert, That the great end of his death was, that by riſing again he might confirm the doctrine of the reſurrection.

D. Was not that very body raiſed which ſuffered on the croſs?

S. This cannot be denied: For God had promiſed, That his "Holy One ſhould not ſee cor-"ruption."

D. And did he not riſe as the firſt-fruits of them that ſleep?

S. The Apoſtle Paul ſays as much.

D. Does it not therefore follow that the ſame body ſhall be raiſed as to every believer?

S. I cannot perceive the force of the inference.

D. It ſeems then, that, according to your reaſon, the full harveſt does not neceſſarily corre-

ſpond with the firſt-fruits—Although theſe conſiſt of the ſame kind of ſeed that was ſown, that of the harveſt may be entirely different. But how can you free yourſelves of abſurdity as to what follows the reſurrection?

S. Of the wicked, do you mean?

D. Yes.

S. We are not entirely agreed whether they ſhall be raiſed or not.

D. I have heard that there was ſome demur among your Rabbies. But there is one thing in which you agree, that annihilation is the eternal ſuffering threatened in the book of God.

S. We are, indeed, agreed in this: For it is ſaid that the wicked ſhall be "puniſhed with e-"verlaſting deſtruction."

D. And does this mean annihilation?

S. It can have no other meaning.

D. Then there may be ſuffering—nay, eternal ſuffering without a patient. May you not as well ſay, that there may be eternal action without an agent?

S. But does not he ſuffer eternally who is ſo deſtroyed by divine power as to be for ever deprived of exiſtence?

D. Your reaſon is truly ſublime. You may, with equal propriety, plead that the puniſhment of a criminal, ſentenced to death by an earthly judge, continues till the end of time; becauſe he can never live again till then.

S. But

S. But is it not inconſiſtent with the juſtice of God eternally to puniſh ſin?

D. It will be difficult to prove this; unleſs you can previouſly ſhow, that it is inconſiſtent with his nature eternally to exiſt.

S. Where is the connexion?

D. It is very clear—If he exiſt eternally, he muſt for ever retain all his perfections; and none of theſe can be dormant in his nature. If, therefore, juſtice be eſſential to God, it muſt be eternally diſplayed in the puniſhment of rebels.

S. It is certainly diſplayed when he puniſhes them with total deſtruction.

D. It is an awful truth, to which I muſt yield my aſſent, however reluctantly, that, while a creature continues to oppoſe God, he owes it to himſelf to prolong the exiſtence of this creature as a monument of his juſtice, as much as eternally to extend his mercy to the veſſels of mercy.

S. Then you believe that doctrine, exploded by all the wiſe among men, that punitive juſtice is eſſential to God.

D. Yes—I believe it from my bitter experience. And do not you believe remunerative juſtice, with reſpect to thoſe who keep his commandments?

S. Undoubtedly I do; for this is all my hope.

D. It appears, then, that you call that only juſtice which inclines to your own ſide. If the balance ſhould happen to lean the other way, it would

B 23

would be iniquity. But do you not acknowledge the attribute of holineſs?

S. This attribute, Sir, is my heart's delight—All my life have I laboured to conform myſelf to it.

D. And is not this the Divine hatred of ſin?

S. Surely it is.

D. Is not this hatred infinite and eternal?

S. It muſt be ſo; becauſe infinity and eternity are alſo attributes of the Divine nature.

D. Muſt not God therefore eternally puniſh ſin?

D. Well, he certainly does ſo, when he for ever deprives ſinners of exiſtence.

D. That is, when he eternally puts it out of his own power to puniſh them. I need not ſay, that it is clear, from what you have already aſſerted, that you deny the doctrine of the atonement by the blood of Chriſt.

S. Every man of ſenſe muſt do ſo—We do not believe that his blood was of any more avail for taking away ſin, than the blood of bulls and goats.

D. For what end then did he die?

S. Beſides his proving that there ſhall be a reſurrection, he died to ſet a perfect example of patience before his followers.

D. And would not the death of any other good man have anſwered the purpoſe as well?

S. Undoubtedly it would, had God pleaſed.

D. You certainly ſuppoſe that the death of Chriſt, in ſome reſpects, anſwered the purpoſe better.

S. Per-

S. Perhaps it did, all circumſtances conſidered.

D. Pleaſe, explain yourſelf; you ſpeak with heſitation.

S. To ſay the truth, our adverſaries have ſtill urged, that ſome ordinary martyrs ſeemed to diſplay more fortitude in ſuffering than he: For he diſcovered reluctance to drink of the cup of ſuffering; whereas ſome of them dared all the cruelty of their perſecutors: He complained that his ſoul was exceeding ſorrowful; while the generality of martyrs have died in ecſtaſies of joy: And he cried out, that his God had forſaken him; whereas they have ordinarily enjoyed his preſence in the moſt ſignal manner.

D. But do not your adverſaries ſay, that his ſufferings were inconceivably more intenſe than theirs—that he really ſuſtained the wrath of God?

S. They do, indeed; but the ſuppoſition is groſsly abſurd.

D. I wiſh, that, in avoiding it, you do not clog your ſyſtem with one unſpeakably more ſo.

S. What can this be?

D. That he was not ſo perfect as ſome of his own followers.

S. He certainly was perfect before his death; but he had great ſtruggles in attaining this perfection.

D. Aſtoniſhing!—I had particular reaſon to be acquainted with him long before his death; and to me he ſeemed to be free from all ſin.—

What

225

What had he to ſtruggle with, according to your apprehenſion?

S. What acceſs you had to be acquainted with him, Sir, I know not: But he had grievous conflicts with a certain bias in his heart, leading contrary to duty, common to him with all the ſons of Adam.

D. Although I never had any love to that Jeſus you ſpeak of, yet, I confeſs I almoſt ſhudder at your language; for I never heard any thing like it in theſe lower regions.

S. You ſeem to form a high eſtimate of Jeſus.

D. I feel myſelf under a dire neceſſity of doing ſo.

S. What!—Is it poſſible that a perſon of your underſtanding can believe that he is more than man?

D. I believe that he is truly the Son of God: And I tremble while I believe.

S. Many on earth, from the weakneſs of ſuperſtition, and eſpecially from the curſed dominion of prieſts, credit this doctrine: But if this be really another world, I ſhould have thought that its inhabitants would have been univerſally delivered from ſuch deluſions.

D. In a ſhort time you ſhall yourſelf be convinced of the truth of that doctrine which you now treat with ſcorn.—But when you found it declared in ſo many parts of the ſcripture, how could you ſatisfy yourſelf that it had no foundation?

S. We

S. We met with many difficulties, indeed, in oppoſing this doctrine: But the moſt weighty were obviated in conſequence of an acurate acquaintance with Eaſtern cuſtoms; with the idioms of the original languages, particularly the force of the articles; and with the various tropes of rhetoric.

D. Did you allow the common people to uſe the ſcriptures?

S. By all means—We ſincerely abjured that inſidious doctrine of the church of Rome, which denies the ſcriptures to the vulgar in their mother-tongue.

D. Were the tranſlations, uſed in the different proteſtant countries, ſtrictly agreeable to the original?

S. Very far from it—Some parts of them were nonſenſe, and others blaſphemy. The moſt of them deſerved to be committed to the flames.

D. Then, I preſume, you taught all the common people Hebrew and Greek.

S. Such a ſtrange whim never entered into our heads.

D. Whim, do you ſay? How, then, did they learn to diſtinguiſh the articles properly; or know when the term God was appropriated to the Father, and when to a mere man; or, in a word, when to truſt their ordinary verſion, and when not?

S. They learned all this from their teachers. We diligently ſtudied the original languages and oriental cuſtoms, and communicated the fruits of our reſearches to them.

D. So, ſo, my friend; you are not at bottom ſuch an enemy to prieſtcraft as you pretend. You might yourſelf have worn the cord of St Francis—You might even, in a ſtrait, have ſupplied a vacancy in the ſchool of Loyola.

S. Sir, you do me manifeſt injury—We did not, like the prieſts of Rome, retain the people in ignorance—we did every thing to open their eyes on the truth.

D. But you took care to provide them with ſpectacles of your making too: For, by your own confeſſion, there was no acceſs into the ſecret treaſures of knowledge but by means of you. Perhaps your ſyſtem was better calculated for the ſupport of prieſtcraft than even that of Rome: For the vulgar can be inſtructed in the nicities you mention by the diligence of their teachers alone. But only leave them to themſelves, and they will continue in ignorance, without giving any body trouble.—But what did you do with ſuch expreſs declarations as that, "There are "three that bear record in heaven?"

S. We drew the pen through it.

D. That was ſhort work indeed—And how did you excuſe your conduct?

S. We

S. We told our adverſaries, that it was not to be found in *ſome* Greek manuſcripts ſuppoſed to be very ancient; and thence *fairly* concluded, that it had not been in *any* of thoſe that were in uſe for ſeveral centuries before.

D. But did you not find hard work with the Fathers of the church, who have been thought almoſt univerſally to have believed the Divinity of Jeſus?

S. They were very ſtubborn indeed: But their confuſed manner of writing afforded great ſcope for our ingenuity; and when any paſſage was incorrigible, we overlooked a ſentence, a line, or a word, in our quotations.

D. But are you not aſhamed to acknowledge this?

S. Not at all—It was merely a pious fraud.

D. What, Doctor; ſtill in league with Rome?

S. We could not make a better of it, Sir: And you know neceſſity has no law.

D. But did your adverſaries never detect you?

S. They ſometimes did.

D. How then did you vindicate yourſelves?

S. We deſpiſed all their allegations, ſtill affirming what our apponents thought they had diſproved; and we patiently ſubmitted to their calumnies, declaring them to be the reproach of Chriſt.

D. And were your labours attended with ſucceſs?

S. Beyond

S. Beyond our moſt ſanguine hopes—Some were ſo thoroughly convinced as to renounce their livings in an idolatrous Trinitarian communion, and erect independant ſocieties.

D. Did all who embraced your opinions obſerve this courſe?

S. By no means. Many, of whom I was one, thought it better to continue where we were. Although we hated the avowed doctrine of the church, we knew the ſalary was nothing the worſe for it.

D. And was this leaving houſes and lands for Chriſt?

S. We left that ſacrifice to thoſe who doated ſo much on him, as to truſt in his blood for ſalvation.

D. But did you ſubſcribe the creeds of theſe churches which you call idolatrous?

S. We certainly did; but with a reſerve.

D. With what reſerve?

S. That of ſecretly abjuring, in our own breaſts, almoſt every article of them.

D. A true diſciple of Loyola this!] But did that thing called conſcience give you no trouble?

S. To ſay the truth, it did ſo at firſt—But what could men do for a living?

D. It ſeems you could not truſt to your maſter. And little wonder—a mere man, who had nothing of his own, could have little to ſpare to ſo many.

S. For

S. For my part, I conſoled myſelf with this, that I had many to keep me in countenance.

D. If I don't miſtake, you come from that barren and bigotted country called Scotland.

S. I do, Sir.

D. And had you many fellow-labourers there?

S. Many more than was generally ſuſpected.

D. It gives me great joy to hear of it.

S. This ſurpriſes me more than any thing you have ſaid; for, from what has already paſſed, I was apt haſtily to conclude that you was a fanatical Trinitarian.

D. You judged right, in ſuppoſing that I believed the doctrine of the Trinity. But altho' we, in this kingdom, know the truth, we "rejoice in iniquity."

S. A very ſtrange acknowledgement?

D. But pleaſe inform me of the means that you have found moſt ſucceſsful: For I had always very little hope of theſe obſtinate Genevan Preſbyterians.

S. There has been a gradual progreſs in this buſineſs. We have got Jeſus deprived of that Headſhip over the church, that was the ſubject of ſo much noiſe and cant in the laſt century; and thoſe who call themſelves his people of what they ſaucily claimed as their rights.

D. And what did you with theſe?

S. We made a preſent of the former to our moſt gracious Sovereign; and we conferred the

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latter on ſome noblemen and gentlemen, who were fit company for him.

D. Well, and what was the conſequence of this diſpoſition of matters?

S. This drove a parcel of blind zealots out of the church, who made a ſtand for their whims, ſome in one way, ſome in another. It ſecured to us, that none ſhould be admitted to office but thoſe who were found qualified by *My Lord* or *His Grace*; it tended more than any thing elſe to ſtill the tumults of the people: And in conſequence of the labours of theſe literal inſtructors, who thus obtained admiſſion, the vulgar begin themſelves to be enlightened—to renounce that aſſuming ſpirit by which they formerly pretended to diſtinguiſh between truth and error; or, at any rate to perceive the folly of that furious zeal by which they were actuated.

D. Do you recollect any other means that were uſed?

S. I do. Our enlightened clergy, with great ardour, preached up Chriſtian charity and moderation; and pretended unſpeakable liberality towards thoſe who differed from them—juſt as the Greeks made great profeſſions of kindneſs, when they wiſhed to introduce the wooden horſe into Troy.

D. You may have a better ſimile than that—juſt as in that antiquated fable, as you will call it, the ſerpent teſtifies a peculiar regard to mother

ther Eve, when he wiſhes her to taſte of the forbidden fruit; or, to come nearer our own time, as a certain ſpirit is ſaid to have pretended great concern for the preſervation of Jeſus, when he wiſhed him to be his own murderer.

S. You are too harſh, Sir: They meant the real good of their hearers.

D. Well; go on with your narrative.

S. Then they proceeded to broach thoſe doctrines called *Arminian*; though, you know, they are properly ours: For they were taught by the venerable Socinus, long before Arminius was born.

D. I believe the Jeſuits may come in for a ſhare of the honour.

S. It does not ſignify.—Theſe being received by many, and allowed to paſs by others, they proceeded to deny original ſin—this naturally led to the denial of imputed righteouſneſs. Then they ventured a ſtep farther, in ſhowing that Jeſus had no righteouſneſs to ſpare—that he needed it all to himſelf. The natural inference from this, you know, was, that he was a mere man. Theſe doctrines being tolerated in the pulpit, it was thought there was ſtill another ſtep to be taken—They were iſſued from the preſs. One publiſhed a work, the whole deſign of which, he declared, was to recommend practical godlineſs—Surely he had great merit in this. Another throws the Goſpels into his own mould;

mould; illuſtrating their harmony on our plan. And this was highly neceſſary; as they had been hitherto explained in a way that ſet them at variance with each other—this was piouſly meant for the uſe of ſchools; although rather a heavy work for young readers. But it has this advantage, that it will laſt the longer in their hands. A third, wiſhing to bring his labours as low as poſſible, writes a catechiſm for children.

D. But how did the bigotted clergy ſavour theſe proceedings?

S. Some of them at firſt appeared extremely zealous—They engaged in the proſecution of one of theſe friends of truth. Nothing would pleaſe them, but either the reformation of the corrupt member, or his exciſion. They proſecuted him with great vehemence, till he began to tremble for the conſequence—for the poor man had his gain in this way. Then he thought it ſafeſt to compromiſe matters. They, to the aſtoniſhment of every one, ſeemed diſpoſed to accede to his propoſals.

D. And did they come to a bearing?

S. Perfectly.

D. But had he not diſcovered his opinions plainly?—How could he get off?

S. He had declared himſelf ſo plainly, that all his friends could not have brought him off—but his enemies did their work for them.

D. Matters had taken a ſtrange turn indeed!

S. They

S. They did ſo—He profeſſed the honeſty of his intentions, and his ſorrow that they had not ſucceeded: Confeſſed it to be poſſible that his work was not abſolutely free from error; or, in other words, that the writer was not infallible: Hoped that *men of candour* would not be offended, which clearly implied that they were uncandid bigots who would: Greatly commended his work, and ſtrenuouſly aſſerted its good tendency: Showed that he had walked in the ſteps of the Evangeliſts themſelves: Maintained that it was very far from his intention to ſay any thing diſparaging of the perſon and character of Jeſus—which, you know, any man of our principles might aver: Proved that the Prieſthood of Chriſt was merely a footſtool to our own good works: And plainly gave it as his opinion, that the Church's Confeſſion ſhould be laid aſide.

D. You aſtoniſh me!—Was there any thing further?

S. Yes—He again declared his ſorrow that his publications had given offence: And I believe he was perfectly ſincere; for the good man, like his forerunner, Paul, would have wiſhed all men altogether ſuch as he was. He alſo confeſſed, that there were ideas in his writings which might *appear* improper; and this he undoubtedly knew before he publiſhed them.

D. But did he diſclaim theſe ideas?

S. He profeſſed to do ſo; and declared his be-

235

lief of the great articles on which he was examined, as laid down in the ſtandards of the Church. In conſequence of which, his perſecutors rejoiced in their victory, and thanked God for it.

D. In my opinion, the victory lay all on his ſide: For I agree with you, in thinking, that, if he did not confeſs that his ideas were really improper, he confeſſed nothing at all; and his *pretending* to believe the doctrines of the ſtandards was no more than what he had done all along. —But are any of them ſuch fools as to reckon him ſincere in the apparent recantation?

S. Not one of them, ſo far as I know.

D. And how do his enemies feel now, when they have had time to contemplate the extent of their conqueſts?

S. Much in the ſame way with the king of Epirus, who, when complimented by his courtiers on his ſignal victory, plainly told them, that ſuch another would ruin him. They have gained ſo little by war, they think it beſt to live in peace.

D. Then they have done nothing of late.

S. I had almoſt forgot one thing—Even while conſcious that ſuch books have been printed, and are diſſeminated, they have publiſhed a very ſolemn and pompous prohibition of all doctrines and publications of this kind.

D. And do they not order the publiſhers to call in their heretical works?

S. Not

S. Not at all—The one that has made moſt noiſe either is, or is meant to be republiſhed in England.

D. Well, theſe gentlemen are determined to prove their country. According to the vulgar proverb—They are true Scotchmen; "they ſhut "the ſtable when the ſteed is ſtolen."—But do they ſti" hold communion with him and others of his mind?

S. They muſt either do ſo, or part with their livings: And the fatal conſequence of this might be, that others would enjoy them, who do not contend half ſo faithfully for their *God* as they do.

D. But might they not do a great deal more without endangering their livings?

S. Undoubtedly they might—Like the Minority in the Britiſh Parliament, they might, time after time, bring in the ſame buſineſs in a great variety of forms, till they had tried the utmoſt of it.

D. Since, then, they have every reaſon to believe that they have taken themſelves in, with reſpect to the ſuppoſed culprit; and eſpecially, when they know that there are others who have declared their ſentiments as plainly as he, how do they acquit themſelves as to their ſilence?

S. They know that beſt themſelves.

D. I am happy to find that the hot-headed zeal of that party is ſo much on the decline. They would not have been ſo peaceable a century ago.

—But how do they ſatisfy their people, as to leaving matters in this ſtate? Are there none of them who think that they might have gone much farther for, as they uſed to call it, *exonering their conſciences?*

S. There are many who do ſo.

D. And have theſe made any ſtir?

S. After the compromiſe, two or three contemptible wretches had the preſumption to complain to the eccleſiaſtical courts againſt the *archheretic*——It even reached the ſupreme court.

D. And what was the iſſue?

S. They treated the complaint with that ſcorn it merited.

D. And how did the orthodox clergy view the conduct of theſe puny complainers?

S. Rather with an evil eye, it was ſuppoſed; as it ſeemed to reflect on their own.

D. Bravo!—Theſe are the beſt tidings that have reached my dominions, from your country at leaſt, for a century.——Now, my good friend, I am much obliged to you for all this glorious intelligence. But I have ſomething more particular with you—Since you renounce the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, I would wiſh to know what plea you can urge for yourſelf in this world of ſpirits.

S. I am at no loſs there—I truſt to my own moral obedience.

D. Your obedience, Sir!—Have you ever obeyed

beyed that commandment of believing on the name of the Son of God?

S. I have ſtill believed in the name of the Son of man.

D. Well, ſee what harveſt you can reap from that.—But I am ſurpriſed to hear you mention the word *moral.*

S. Do you know any thing in my conduct inconſiſtent with morality?

D. From your own confeſſion, I know that you have ſapped its very foundations, by denying the juſtice of God and eternal puniſhments; you have taught men that they may ſin with impunity, by aſſuring them that they need be under no apprehenſions of an awful hereafter.

S. On the contrary, I have done every thing in my power to give them juſt ideas of God.

D. You have, indeed, if theſe lie in thinking that he is altogether ſuch a one as themſelves.

S. I don't know who you are, Sir; although your appearance inſpires me with ſome awe—But I am a man of learning; and I hope you will treat me like a gentleman.

D. You ſhall have your deſert.

S. Well, Sir, that is all I demand.

D. But what have you to offer to God for your many ſins?

S. My ſincere repentance.

D. And what is your atonement for frequent relapſes into the ſame ſins?

S. Still

S. Still the ſame acceptable ſacrifice.

D. And is the ſincere repentance of a rebel, or traitor, accounted, in your country, a proper expiation of his crimes?

S. I muſt acknowledge it is not. But——

D. But what?

S. God is a more gracious Sovereign than any one on earth.

D. But would it be for the intereſts of any *human* government, that a prince ſhould be ſo gracious as, time after time, to pardon a rebel, notwithſtanding his reiterated crimes?

S. I dare not aſſert that it would.

D. How, then, can it be ſubſervient to the intereſts of the *divine* government?—But what claim have you to the mercy of God, who have all your life deſpiſed it as offered through the blood of his Son?

S. I could never believe that Jeſus was his Son.

D. Then you have believed leſs than the devils.

S. I know no ſuch beings—The corruptions of the heart are the only devils.

D. Know, vain man, that I am one of theſe ſpirits; and that I have been forced to confeſs what you have laboured to deny, That Jeſus is "the Son of the living God!"—Know that he deſtroyed our power by his death, in which you refuſe to confide. Whence is it, but from this, that the pillars of our kingdom, in heatheniſh darkneſs,

darkneſs, have been levelled throughout the world; that our oracles have ceaſed; and that his doctrine, without any human aid—nay, in oppoſition to all the force and ſtratagem of earth and hell, hath riſen triumphant on a benighted world?

S. Your language appals me—But I can ſcarcely believe you ſerious.

D. Surely, then, you never believed your Bible.

S. I ſincerely believed it.

D. Did you believe it to be all the language of the infallible Spirit?

S. I believed that the *authors* of ſcripture might be miſtaken as to matters of fact, and err as to points of argument.

D. By thy own words thou art condemned. It is impious arrogance in thee to pretend, that thou didſt ever believe the word of God. There is not a ſpirit in theſe eternal manſions whoſe faith does not far exceed thine.——Follow me! Thou art a fit companion for avowed infidels: Only, if poſſible, thou wilt make them worſe by thy vile deceit—They are honeſt men to thee. Thou art more proper company for atheiſts—Thou haſt been a purveyor for them—They made matter to be God; thou haſt made God to be matter.

S. If you be the prince of darkneſs, you can have no claim on me.—I hope Jeſus will remember

ber me. I ſuffered much in his cauſe in the other world.

D. Although I am the father of a lie on earth, I allow no falſehood here. Thou ſuffer for him! Much did he ſuffer from thee. He for ever diſowns thee.—That Jeſus of whom thou ſpeakeſt, is unknown here. By thy own confeſſion he is a mere man; therefore he cannot deliver thee out of my hand—An angel muſt be ſtronger than he. The Jeſus in whom I believe, and whom thou haſt obſtinately rejected, hath the keys of hell; and I act merely by his orders.

FINIS.

6 MA 65